"As the first woman
was drawn from the
side of the first Adam,
so from the side
of the second Adam,
opened by the
death-wound of Love,
each of us has
been formed, and
formed for Him."

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Religious Profession: Second Baptism

PAUL HINNEBUSCH, O.P.

Since the days of early monasticism, it has been traditional teaching in the Church that religious profession is like a second Baptism, restoring one to full baptismal innocence. This idea developed from the ancient conviction that religious life is the best substitute for martyrdom. Beyond any doubt martyrdom accomplishes a perfect purification of the soul, so that the martyr passes immediately into divine glory. In a way analogous to martyrdom, religious profession also purifies the soul, taking away in full the penalty due to sins committed after Baptism, and giving a new vigor to the life of grace.

Martyrdom and religious profession purify because each in its own way is a perfection of the conformity to the crucified and risen Christ granted in Baptism. This conformity is a likeness to Christ resulting from a unity of life with him. Purification from sin and its penalties, and renewed vigor of Christian life, come only from union with Christ in the likeness of his death and resurrection, for his sacrifice alone can work these effects.

In discussing Baptism of water and Baptism of blood, Saint Thomas applies this principle, that conformity with Christ is required if we are to receive the benefits of his redemption. Baptism of water unites and likens to Christ by its sacramental power, while martyrdom or Baptism of blood unites and likens to Christ by actual suffering for him. "The Passion of Christ," says Thomas, "acts in the Baptism of water through a certain figurative representation,... but acts in Baptism of blood through the imitation of Christ's own work on the cross."[1] Thomas means to say that in Baptism of water we are nailed to the cross with Christ symbolically, but this symbolism is a sacrament containing divine power actually bringing about what is symbolized. "To each baptised person," he says, "the passion is imparted as if the baptized himself had suffered and died on the cross."[2] Inasmuch as by Baptism

[1] *Summa Theol.* IIIa., Q. 66, a. 12.
[2] *Ibid.* Q. 69, a. 2.

a person is united to Christ, says Thomas, and likened to him as his member, becoming one mystical person with him, the pains of Christ are imparted to him just as if he himself had borne them.[3]

In martyrdom, however, one is nailed to the cross with Christ not merely symbolically and sacramentally, but in fullest reality, literally dying in union with him. Religious life, like martyrdom, strives to achieve in full reality, by daily self-denial, what was accomplished in Baptism symbolically.

The martyr's union and likeness with Christ consists above all in his perfect participation in Christ's own charity in which he consumed himself in the sacrifice of the cross. Saint Thomas says that the same Holy Spirit who works in Baptism of water by the hidden power of the sacrament works in martyrdom by the highest degree of fervor of charity and affection, according to the Gospel, "Greater love than this no one has, that one lay down his life for his friends."[4] The religious strives for the martyr's fervor of charity, the martyr's perfect union and likeness to Christ, by offering himself as a daily sacrifice in fidelity to his rule. Saint Athanasius recounts how Saint Antony burned with desire for the grace of martyrdom during the days of persecution, and later on retired into solitude "so that there he could be a martyr all the days of his life."[5] The early history of religious life gives abundant evidence that from the very beginning monasticism was always looked upon as the next best thing to martyrdom, and furthermore was seen as a perfect manner of living to the full the grace of Baptism.[6]

Baptism imposes upon every Christian the obligation to be in full reality a victim of charity with Christ crucified, each one in his own manner and degree. For the union and likeness to Christ bestowed in Baptism is only a beginning. The purpose of baptismal grace is to conform our whole life and all the living of it to the crucified and risen Christ, "always bearing about in our body the dying of Christ," says Saint Paul, "so that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodily frame" (2 Cor. 4:10).

[3] *Ibid.* ad 1; Q. 49, a. 3, ad 1,3.
[4] *Ibid.* Q. 66, a. 12.
[5] *Vita Antonii,* 47.
[6] E. Delaye, S.J., "La Doctrine du 'Second Bapteme': Les Voeux de Religion." *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite,* I, col. 1229-30.

Baptism as a symbolic action tells us not only what the grace of Christ is doing in the soul at the moment of Baptism, but also what the baptised must then do in cooperation to bring this grace to its full development. Baptism, which nails us symbolically to the cross, says to us: "Voluntarily die with Christ in charity, if you would live with him. By the continuing grace of this Baptism, die daily to sin by putting to death every attraction which would hamper the life of the risen Christ which is already working in you by this Baptism."

The baptismal character consecrates every Christian as one victim with Christ crucified, as a living sacrifice to be offered to God in daily life. The Christian himself is to make this offering by the power given him by the baptismal character. The character is a power, a sharing in Christ's priestly power, a power which each Christian must put into action. The action in question is active participation in the sacrifice of the cross, and the most perfect participation consists in offering oneself in full reality as a total holocaust with Christ. This the martyr achieves to supreme perfection, and this the religious strives to achieve by the total death to self accomplished by living according to the evangelical counsels in fulfillment of his vows.

The baptismal character is a consecration, and as such is a participation in the holiness of God granted to us through and in Christ, the priest and victim of the cross. Martyrdom and religious life are very special consummations of this consecration, this sacred quality, this sharing in the holiness of Christ. Martyrdom and religious life, each in its own way, are perfections of baptismal grace and of the baptismal character. By bringing to actuality the potentialities of the character, they bring the graces of Baptism to fuller development, giving the soul an even greater purity than that given in Baptism by bringing one to an ever fuller participation in the life and holiness of God.

Holiness, or the sacredness which is consecration, has its positive and its negative elements. The positive element is the sharing in God's own holiness which he grants to the consecrated one; the negative element is purity or absence of all that is opposed to the holiness of God. The positive element, a participation in

the holiness of Christ and the sanctifying power of his sacrifice, is the principal cause of purification. Let us consider first how religious profession grants us a deeper sharing in the purifying power of Christ's holiness.

While Baptism totally purifies the soul of all guilt and of all punishment for sin, it does not immediately purify the soul of the stain of concupiscence, which, while it is not sin, is a disorder still existing among man's powers, and can be a fruitful source of sin. Baptism, by giving abundant grace to control concupiscence, makes it fully possible for a person to maintain his baptismal innocence by never committing a mortal sin. Baptismal holiness should never be lost. The rich sacramental grace of Baptism maintains one in baptismal innocence by working through his acts of mortification by which daily he puts to death the stirrings of concupiscence. In other words, Baptism completes its work of purification only by our cooperation in striving for the full likeness of Christ crucified. If we obey the baptismal command to bear the likeness of Christ in the self-denial of our everyday life, then we will never die the spiritual death of mortal sin. Through our dying with Christ, the risen Christ, alive in us by grace, will communicate to us daily an ever-increasing share in the holiness of his resurrection.

Since religious life aims to achieve this perfect self-denial in order to live the life of the risen Christ in all its fullness, the religious gradually comes to an even greater purity of soul than that bestowed on him in Baptism, for he becomes ever freer of concupiscence and less likely to be sullied by sins stemming from it. In a positive way, he enters ever more fully into the life and holiness of Christ and God.

But even aside from this increasing sharing in the divine life and holiness achieved through the labors of religious life, the very act of religious profession wipes away all penalty due to sins committed after Baptism, so that one starts life anew with all the fresh vigor and innocence of a newly baptized person.

We have already indicated the reason for this: by profession one accomplishes in living reality, by fervent charity, the conformity to Christ accomplished symbolically in Baptism. The baptismal character marked him out as a victim to be offered; religious

profession is an actual offering of the victim in a very perfect way. Religious profession is a full response in fullness of charity to the baptismal consecration. The baptismal character, which consecrated this person as God's own, was Christ's gift to the soul. But this gift gave the soul the power to make, in turn, the gift of self to God. For we can truly belong to God only by wanting to belong, only by giving self in love; and we can do this only in Christ. Love's voluntary consecration of self to God is thus a most excellent fulfillment of the baptismal consecration. The baptismal character is the power voluntarily to give self to God through the sacrifice of Christ; religious profession is a truly sublime use of this power. That is why it brings a new outpouring of the yet untapped fuller riches of Baptism.

But even in our most perfect use of our baptismal character, we are more used than using. That is, the character is an instrumental power, making us a living instrument of Christ the priest, so that it is really he who is offering us to God through the instrumentality of our offering of self. Through our acts of participation in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, for example, Christ is offering us as one victim with himself, to the glory of God. Unless he were acting in us and through us, our offering would be worthless; we would not be sharing in the Mass. It is by reason of the baptismal character, which makes us one mystical person with him, that he acts in and through us.

Religious profession, and the whole religious life in fulfillment of it, becomes one's most perfect form of participation in the sacrifice of the Mass and of the cross. The religious is "holy in body and in spirit" (1 Cor. 7:34); that is, totally consecrated, sacred to the Lord, sharing in a special way in Christ as consecrated victim of the cross, participating above all in Christ's burning charity. In using the baptismal character in participating in Christ's sacrifice, we said, we are more being used than using. Profession, as a sublime response in fullness of charity to the baptismal consecration, is a giving of self to be used by Christ; it is a giving of full consent to the victimhood which Christ initiated in the soul by imprinting the baptismal character upon it; it is an offering of self to Christ in a total gift to be used as he sees fit in "filling up what is wanting" to his own sacrifice, for the glory of the Father (Col. 1:24).

Christ, however, uses us, offers us, through our own willing offering of self, and religious profession is a firm intention inspired by a fullness of charity, to so offer self in the whole of one's living. The Christ to whom one thus gives self is the sacrificed Lamb of God. Religious profession is the public declaration, sealed by vow, of one's firm intention to strive for the likeness of the Lamb in fullest reality, especially the likeness of his charity in which he sacrificed himself, using the most perfect means the Gospel has to offer short of martyrdom; namely, the evangelical counsels by which one strips self of all things to follow Christ. Since by this intention, sealed by vow, one breaks irrevocably with the world and commits himself to this union and likeness with Christ, is it any wonder that one receives a new outpouring of the purifying and envigorating power of the passion of Christ, which started us on this way in Baptism?

Religious profession, moreover, is a consecration not merely because one makes the offering of self, but even more because the offering is officially accepted by God through his Church. Through this acceptance, a new sacredness is given to the very being of the one so consecrated, a new sharing in the holiness of Christ, the consecrated one par excellence, "one whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world" (John 10:36, Spencer).

This is the teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas, who writes that religious profession is "a certain spiritual blessing or consecration which, by the institution of the Apostles" (i.e., the Church), "is given in the profession of a certain rule."[7] In other words, the consecration granted by the Church in the act of a religious making his profession, is a sacramental. In the theological terminology of his time, Thomas uses the words "*spiritual* blessing or consecration" to distinguish this consecration from the consecration which consists in a sacramental *character*. That is, this consecration is a sacramental, not a sacrament, as is the consecration granted in Baptism or Holy Orders.[8]

A sacramental is a means of grace primarily by reason of the infallible impetratory power of the Church, and secondarily by

[7] *Summa Theol.* IIa-IIae., Q. 88, a. 7.
[8] Cf. F. Vandenbroucke, "La profession, second bapteme." *La Vie Spirituelle*, 315, Fev. 1947, p. 256.

reason of the dispositions of the one using the sacramental, or the one receiving the sacramental blessing or consecration.[9] But the Church's impetration and the recipient's dispositions have to work together; that is, the Church infallibly impetrates graces from God for those who, in the use of the sacramental, are properly disposed to receive them; and fervor of charity is the most important and most efficacious of these dispositions.

The sacramentals of the Church by their very nature are related to the sacraments, either preparing us for their more fruitful reception or stirring up the grace already in us by reason of a sacrament.[10] Religious profession, inasmuch as it is accepted and ratified by the Church, is a sacramental destined to consummate the graces of Baptism and Confirmation; it is a pledge of actual graces which will bring to full perfection the graces of these sacraments in making this person a living holocaust to God in charity. These new developments of the grace of the sacraments will result through religious profession as a sacramental only if the one making profession is rightly disposed, making his vows in full sincerity with the religious attitudes which are of their essence: namely, the full intent to make the total consecration of self as a holocaust to God, from motives of religion and fervent charity.

Religious profession made without these right dispositions, without charity's sincere intent to make a total gift of self, would not bring the effects of a second Baptism, even though the Church's acceptance makes this profession a sacramental. For, as we said, the Church's intercessory power obtains benefits only for those rightly disposed to receive them.

But the Church's acceptance of a profession made with the right dispositions of charity and religion will bring to a new fulness the graces to which one is entitled by reason of the baptismal character. That is why profession is like a second Baptism. Profession brings a new unity and conformity with Christ crucified, in fervent charity. It is likened to martyrdom which, Saint Thomas tells us, works Baptism's effect precisely because it is so perfect a participation in Christ's charity on the cross.

[9] *Codex Juris Canonici*, 1144. Prummer, *Manuale Theologiae Moralis*, III, Herder, Friburgi Brisgoviae: 1933, p. 74-75.
[10] Cf. *Summa Theol.* IIIa., Q. 65, a. 1, ad 6.

Precisely what effects similar to those of Baptism are produced by religious profession? From Saint Thomas's treatment of this question, Cardinal Cajetan concludes that religious profession takes away neither the guilt of original sin nor the guilt of mortal sin, but does take away all the penalties due to sin, and also the guilt of venial sin, in the way that any increase in the fervor of charity can take it away.[11] This certainly is the mind of Saint Thomas, for in his treatment his approach is to compare religious profession with other ways of making satisfaction for sin, showing the eminent superiority of religious profession over these other ways:

> It may be reasonably stated that also by entrance into religion a man obtains remission of all his sins. For if by giving alms a man may forthwith satisfy for his sins, according to Dan. 4:24, "Redeem thy sins with alms," much more does it suffice to satisfy for all his sins that a man devote himself wholly to the divine service by entering religion, for this surpasses all manner of satisfaction, even that of public penance, according to the Decretals, just as a holocaust exceeds a sacrifice, as Gregory declares. Hence we read in the lives of the Fathers that by entering religion one receives the same grace as by being baptized.[12]

The immediately following words of Thomas show clearly that by "the same grace as by being baptized" he understands "being absolved from all debt of punishment."

Elsewhere also Thomas teaches that the analogy of profession with Baptism concerns the remission of penalties for sin, since the religious has been freed from sin by the total consecration of his will to God. This is something far greater than all the created things he could have given in alms for his sins. Moreover, religious life itself is the satisfactory penance par excellence.[13] Profession, therefore, brings the remission of all penalty due to sin because of the totality of charity's gift of self.

As the offering of a holocaust of charity, causing a new and deeper unity and conformity with Christ crucified, profession works

[11] *In Summa Theol.* IIa-IIae., Q. 189, a. 3, ad 3.
[12] *Summa Theol.* IIa-IIae., Q. 189, a. 3, ad 3.
[13] *In Sent.* IV, dist. 4, q. 3, a. 3, qle. 3, ad 3. Cf. *Qdlb.* 3, q. 5, a. 13.

not just the purifying effects of remission of all penalty, but brings also a new invigoration of sanctifying grace, a greater participation in the holiness of Christ which was begun in Baptism.

As far back as the fourth century, the ceremonies of reception into religious life show that the relationship between religious life and Baptism was well understood.[14] In baptism, says Saint Paul, we die and are buried with Christ and simultaneously rise with him to a new life (Rom. 6:4). In some religious institutes, at the reception of the habit the postulants, prostrate on the ground, are covered with a funeral shroud to signify their total death with Christ accomplished by entrance into religion, where they will share in a new way in the life of the risen Christ.

The same idea is expressed in modern times by the black clothing worn by postulants in practically all communities of Sisters. Postulants wear black, because they are preparing to die to the world by their admittance to the novitiate. The white veil they will wear as novices signifies their newness of life with the risen Christ. But when profession is made, the white veil gives place to a black one to symbolize the ceaseless, daily dying to the attractions which ever seek to allure the spouse of Christ away from him. In the liturgy of the blessing and giving of the black veil, it is called a sign on her face, perpetually reminding the virgin to admit no lover but the Lord Jesus. Dead to all else, she is alive to God in Christ.

In modern times the Church has instituted temporary vows in preparation for the perpetual profession of religious, and therefore theologians discuss a new question: Which profession, first or perpetual, restores the soul to baptismal innocence? Pointing out that martyrdom is a total and definitive gift of self, some theologians say that since profession brings baptismal innocence because it is the next best thing to martyrdom, the privilege of second Baptism would seem to come only with the definitive gift of self made in perpetual profession.[15] And this not merely because in charity one intends the total gift of self, but because the gift is officially ratified by the Church, who accepts this person as irrevocably consecrated to God and puts the seal of definitiveness upon the gift. As thus accepted by the Church, as we have seen, profession is a

[14] F. Vandenbroucke, *op. cit.*, p. 250f.
[15] E. Delaye, *op. cit.*, col. 1230.

powerful sacramental, stirring up to a new vigor, by the Church's impetration, the grace which is latent in us by reason of the baptismal character, and giving a new purity in proportion to the fervor of charity of the one making profession.

The emphasis here is upon the definitiveness of the gift of self. Such a definitive gift, of its very nature, requires the kind of charity which brings with it the remission of all penalty due to sin. (Saint Thomas teaches that "man obtains forgiveness, not only of guilt, but also of punishment, from the fervor of charity.... He obtains forgiveness of punishment according to the measure of his devotion and fervor."[16]) The problem facing the theologian, then, is to determine which profession, first or final, carries with it this definitiveness, sealed by the Church.

However, in practice it really does not matter, for even apart from profession, one can give self totally to God in fervent charity, and by reason of the perfection of this charity can obtain the full remission of penalty due to sin and a new vigor of the life of grace. For example, Saint John Gualbert, not yet a religious, in sparing the life of his brother's murderer out of reverence for the sign of the cross, certainly exercised the kind of heroic charity which brings full remission of sin's penalties. The same could be said of a nurse's heroism, inspired by charity, in risking her life to nurse patients who have contagious diseases.

Only God knows, of course, when and whether such a gift of self in charity has really been made. But this is true even of religious profession: Only God is the judge of whether or not a profession, even though accepted by the Church, has been made with those interior dispositions necessary for full remission of sin's penalties. Normally, of course, the presumption is that the dispositions were there. It really does not matter, then, at which profession a soul is restored to full baptismal innocence, since by fervent fidelity to the grace of the religious vocation a religious can regain again, and permanently maintain, that baptismal innocence as a perpetual state of soul, renewing it from day to day. As one theologian expresses it:

> That complete purification which, according to Saint Thomas, is effected by religious profession, is not a sort of plenary indul-

[16] *Summa Theol.* IIIa, Q. 79, a. 5.

gence granted on this auspicious occasion, but is a normal effect of that perfect charity which covers a multitude of sins. Every complete giving of self, made with the same fervor of love, purifies the soul in the same way.[17]

We must note the author's words, "the complete giving of self." In the context in which he writes, the complete giving of self is charity's perfect act, requiring such a fervor of charity that it brings remission of all penalty. It has been objected that if what he says is true, a young couple on their wedding day with full charity would also have a full remission of their temporal punishment; hence their act would also be a second Baptism. Nevertheless, such an act has never been called in tradition a second Baptism, while religious profession has. Just what is it, then, about religious profession, that makes it warrant such a title?

It must be conceded that, in the case of the young married couple, their gift of self to God in charity could in all truth be called a second Baptism. However, only religious profession involves, by its very nature, the total gift of self to God in full charity, whereas marriage by its nature does not necessarily involve such a gift. Parties can be validly and meritoriously married without an act of perfect charity, and only a very exceptional couple will achieve such charity. Parties entering marriage ordinarily are so intent upon one another that rarely would their marriage contract be inspired by a perfect act of love of God. This is Saint Paul's precise point on why virginity is superior to marriage: married people are "divided" by their endeavors to please one another, and therefore do not concentrate fully on achieving perfect charity (1 Cor. 7:33). Marriage may be a total gift of self to one another, but not necessarily in charity, and so not necessarily to God. But religious profession by its very nature is the complete gift of self to God, in the likeness of the charity of martyrdom, and therefore always (when rightly made) is a second Baptism.

A truly fervent religious, moreover, when faithful to the graces which come with his sacramental consecration, is forever renewing the offering of self made in profession; for example, spontaneously he or she again offers self daily at Mass, at the Offertory, at the elevation, at the "Per Ipsum," and again in thanksgiving after

[17] Marie-Eugene, O.C.D. *I Want to See God*, p. 364.

communion. And because he is fervent, he is able to make the offering with ever more intense charity. Such new offerings of self with new fervor of charity, especially when made in union with the sacrificed Lamb in the holy Eucharist, quickly restore whatever baptismal vigor and innocence may have been lost by venial sins committed in moments of human weakness. The religious consecration, as a sacramental, brings a title to special graces to maintain the fervor of charity, by the cooperation of the religious.

Let us not forget that the fervent religious, growing steadily in charity, is the normal religious. By normal, we mean one who is what a religious ought to be, namely, one who is sincerely and ceaselessly striving for the perfection of charity. Since a religious vocation is a call precisely to this ceaseless striving for the perfection of charity, the normal religious is the one who so strives; and the one who so strives remains ever fervent in charity, and therefore is able to make the gift of self in successively more fervent acts of charity, ever giving self to God in living love.

Such wholehearted, perpetual giving of self maintains the soul in baptismal innocence and holiness, so that the normal religious, as we have defined him, should go straight to heaven at the moment of death. If we offer so many prayers and sacrifices for deceased religious, it is because unfortunately a goodly number of them fall short of what should be normal, fail to strive for perfect charity, and therefore fall into deliberate sin.

The normal fervent charity of the religious is, of course, the charity of Christ's own sacred heart, communicated to the religious chiefly in the holy Eucharist. In the Eucharistic sacrifice, by the power of the baptismal character, we participate in and are conformed to Christ's own sacrifice of the cross, receiving from him the flaming charity of his heart which consumed him as a holocaust of love. The charity we receive from him takes us back to him as one burning holocaust with him, totally purifying us of whatever stains may still remain in us. Thus baptismal innocence is the permanent possession of the faithful religious, for fervent religious life, like martyrdom, is a perfection and fulfillment of Baptism.

LEARNING HOW TO LOVE. III

Divine Charity

A. DURAND

The love of God for man, and that love of man for God which is God's greatest gift, is compared by God himself not to one or the other but to all of the natural loves which man knows: that is, to affection, to friendship, and to sexual love.

For, first, God speaks of sending his Son to be older brother in our family, and speaks of us as born again so as to enter this family of his. Between God and ourselves, then, there must arise something like the affection of father for child; and between ourselves and his Son, perhaps something like the affection of brothers and sisters. Indeed, at least once in a great passage from the prophet Isaiah, cited below, it is actually the affection of the mother for her child which is used by the Holy Spirit to describe the love of God for you and me. Secondly, Christ, the Son of God, on the night before his death, though manifestly their Master and Lord, told the men who were willing to follow him that he would no longer call them servants but friends. Finally, by his favorite image, and the best one of all, our Lord does not hesitate to compare his own union with the soul to sexual love: calling himself the Spouse, or the Bridegroom, in that marriage between God and man to which we are all called.

Let us pass in review each of these three natural loves, in order to learn from them what our Lord meant in using them to express some truth about divine charity.

The meeting of man with God has been compared to the encounter of two infinities. The infinitely little turns to the infinitely mighty; infinite weakness to infinite power; that which is not, to him who alone is.

It is therefore with the image of the little child, utterly dependent on its parents, that our Lord begins his lessons on how we must love God, and on how God loves us: "Amen I say unto you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of heaven as a little

child will not enter into it" (Luke 18:17). The longing for him which God first grants, and which we must forever beg him to increase, is somewhat like a child's love for his parents, and therefore is a need-love — the greatest need-love of all, based on the profound conviction that, without God, we are as fatally lost as an abandoned child. To love God in this fashion is to be poor in spirit. And the poor in spirit are called blessed by Christ, for they will inherit the earth. We would not be surprised to learn that they would inherit heaven but, at first sight, it does not appear that they could hope to inherit very much this side of heaven.

Heirs of the earth they do become, though. For who are the poor in spirit? They are children of God who know themselves, and accept themselves, as lacking everything; who take their own helplessness and uselessness for granted; who are actually glad of their wretchedness; who never desire, and never expect, to manage their own lives. For this child-like littleness and dependence are met, on God's side, by a father or a mother's care, which follows his children wherever they go, holding them in his loving presence everywhere, and making the entire universe into their Father's house. "Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?" (Deut. 32:6). Our God has not brought us into existence only to abandon us. "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him. For he knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust" (Ps. 103:13-14). No, the love for us of Love himself will never falter, nor can the deepest human affection do more than yield a hint of what it is like. "Can a woman forget her infant, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you" (Is. 49:15).

But that love of God which is brought to life in us through Christ, is exemplified not merely in the affection of child and parent, but in that devotion to each other of two equals which we have called friendship. The word makes us hesitate. Can we be God's friends? Can we meet him on anything like an equal footing? Can we find ourselves side by side with our God in the same work, the same rest, the same prayer? And can our love for him be the gift-love found between friends? How is friendship possible with the Creator of the universe — between him who is and us who are not, who are simply made of nothing?

But even Abraham, under the old law, heard himself called friend by God. Under the new law, something more wonderful still has happened: the infinity between ourselves and the Maker of the universe disappears in Christ. God has given us his Son. With the child of Mary, friendship is surely possible. And to us he grants it — for we must not forget that it is always a grace and a gift. It is a little hard to believe, of course; a little difficult to get used to. But friends of Christ we are, and if called to share in his cross, dear and special friends. A servant, he said, is one who does not know what his master is about, who cannot share in his master's purpose as a friend must do. But we know the cause for which he came. We have joined him in its service. We two have the same things at heart. We can live with him now, work with him, pray with him, rest with him.

Friendship is a gift-love. It is true, of course, that anything we give Christ is his already, that anything we may do for him is only what we owe. Still he allows us to make our choice; we could refuse, we could reject the offered friendship. Of course we never shall; but we may well be a little frightened of it. Charity now has its chance to become a gift-love, and a great one. The voice of one of our Lord's mightiest friends may make us aware how timid and half-hearted on our side this friendship still remains, how little we are prepared to give:

> And all this, which once stood to my credit, I write down as loss, for the love of Christ. For that matter there is nothing that I do not write down as loss compared with the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord; for love of him I have lost everything, treat everything else as refuse, if I may have Christ to my credit....Him I would learn to know and the virtue of his resurrection, and what it means to share his sufferings, moulded into the pattern of his death.... (Phil. 3:7-10).

Last of all, our Lord uses even sexual love to teach us charity; and this is both his favorite image and his greatest. First, for all mankind, the kingdom of heaven "may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son"; and all mankind receive the invitation to the wedding-feast. But each of us, each individual soul, may be thought of as called to a union with Christ comparable to the union of man and woman. But before we try to learn

all that this image can teach us, it is important to examine why it is by far the best of all.

When a good teacher is dealing with something mysterious, he should always be careful not to take the mystery out of it, so to speak. For what could be worse than to leave us with the impression that we have understood clearly that which lies beyond understanding? So what must he do? He cannot use examples; for there can be no clear case or instance of that which lies outside human experience. The best he can do is to make comparisons, to find these likenesses that we call metaphors. And here he must be cautious in his choices; for if the likeness is too close, we shall again be deceived into thinking we have understood; and if it is not close enough, it will bring no light to our minds.

Although it will delay us a little, I would like to call attention to a wonderful example of our Lord's choice of metaphor in teaching about grace. By grace we are granted a kind of mysterious sharing in the divine life. Now, the life of God himself is an impenetrable mystery to any finite mind as such, and the grace by which we somehow take part in that life must be a mystery as well. For his metaphor, our Lord might have chosen one of several different kinds of created life, of which we have some knowledge. There is the life of the angels, for example. He might have explained that the life which he had come to impart would be in some sort like that of the angels, or would join us to God somewhat as the angels are joined to God. But what do we know about angelic existence, or about the mode of its union with God? All this would be too far above us. Still, the life he brings is spiritual through and through, and so one might expect that at least he would choose an image from the life of our minds, rather than from the workings of our bodies: that we are to be joined with him in one life just as our thoughts, let us say, are joined to the intellect which forms them. But again, this would be poor teaching, because the comparison does not stir our feelings and is bound to leave us dissatisfied. Thoughts and thinking are not real enough: if we are not going to be joined to our Lord any more firmly or surely than our reasonings seem to be joined to our mind, the bond will not strike us as very secure. Then he might have chosen his likeness from animal life; and this would

certainly be much more effective. Now we would become one life in him somewhat as our finger, or hand, or any other organ, is part of our body. This is, of course, the great metaphor which was the favorite of Saint Paul; but it was not the choice of Christ himself.

What was our Lord's own choice? In order to convey to us something about the highest kind of life there is, the supreme Teacher builds his likeness on the lowest kind of life there is. "I am the vine, and you the branches." The most primitive life we know is that of plants. (We may also recall the metaphors of the yeast in the dough, the mustard seed, and the grain of wheat.)

Now, why employ the most base and primitive kind of life to reveal the most sublime and spiritual? For this great reason: that there will be almost no chance of our confusing the two. As we contemplate our Lord's metaphor, we are not likely to get these two kinds of life mixed up, nor to come to think that one actually contains something of the other. The divine life is utterly beyond our comprehension because it is so different from our human life, as being so far above us. Vegetable life is also quite beyond our grasp, because so much below us. Nevertheless, we do have plenty of experience of plants; they are familiar things. Though we shall never know what it is like to be a plant, we see them all about us, and can watch how they behave. So the plant image was a subtle choice, because it can bring the divine life near to us, while never leading us into the error of thinking that we have seized its nature.

To return to our subject, when our Lord wanted to teach us, not about the life of God but about the love of God, he might again have based his comparisons on the affections of the angels. And surely the love which Gabriel feels towards Michael, and which both feel towards Raphael (although of course we dare not say *feel*, since none has any feelings whatever), must be more like charity than any human attachment will ever be. But this is no metaphor for poor creatures like us, for whom a life without feelings is simply unimaginable. Or Christ might have fastened upon only one sort of human love, the highest, that of friendship, which by nature holds so much more that is reasonable and spiritual than the others. But to select this likeness, and to allow no other, might well lead us to conclude that the soul could actually enter into a

relationship with God of the same nature as the relationship between two human friends. In other words, we might be induced to think of charity as just a sublime sort of friendship, instead of the ineffable union that it is. Similarly, the kind of attachment that we have called affection would not be the best choice, because there is still a little too much that is spiritual and lofty about the love of parent for child, and of child for parent.

So what our Lord does is to use all of the natural loves, comparing charity to three things so different as to make it plain that none of the comparisons can be adequate; and to find his favorite image in the lowest of all, the one which holds the most passion, and is nearest to the instinctive attachments of the animals.

Sexual love would not offer the best possible image for charity, of course, if the two were simply unlike; its great advantage lies in its being at once so like and so unlike the love to which it is compared.

In what are the two alike? In so many respects that we cannot mention them all. First of all, in that both are mysterious, and both so overwhelming. In sexual love, man and woman do not understand what has come over them: their life is suddenly transformed, neither caring what happens if only they can share the fate and fortunes of the person they love. So it is with charity. As our love of Christ grows, we can no longer find contentment in any grace or gift he may send; and this is not surprising, since, in the urge to seek him for himself alone, he has already imparted the greatest gift of all. It is Christ we come to want, and nothing else will serve. Nor may we forget that our Lord, who has given us this longing for him, pursues us in his turn with a love which demands our very self, and all of it. The Apostle is speaking for him when he warns: "I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God. For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). As the first woman was drawn from the very side of the first Adam, so from the side of the second Adam, opened by the death-wound of Love, each of us has been formed, and formed for him. In this Bridegroom, we find someone who loved us before we were born, who is in truth our destiny — the one we were made for, whose absolute possession we must become, for whom in a true sense we are the only soul in the world. It is not mere lovers' talk now.

Because it is so all-absorbing, this sort of love, you remember, is that into which people are said to fall. An overwhelming force seems to alter their whole lives, so that every step, every thought, every breath is different now. Can the love of Christ do as much? It can do far more. It can change a life beyond recognition. Indeed, in a way, and to a degree, even in our miserable selves, as we are at this moment, charity has worked something of a transformation. No raptures, of course; no intoxication; no sense of being swept off our feet; but effects far more real. None of us makes very good sense, surely, unless it is presumed that we are in love. Even our sad old world will grant that a man or woman must be suffering from a pretty bad case of it to do what we have done, to make our commitment, to accept our prospects, to face our usual day. Has any man loved a woman so much, has any woman loved a man so much, as to be ready for the sake of that love to give up love itself, and to accept a lifetime of poverty, chastity and obedience?

Just as man and woman, by their love, are brought into a union more total than any other — so that one becomes, as it were, the property of the other, and the two seem to make a whole at last out of their divided and partial being — so Christ can and will make us his, so that "we shall no longer be our own, but our life will be hidden with Christ in God." He will live in us and we in him. We shall feel as if we had never truly lived before, never before been able to rise above life and death. And all this because we belong at last to him who alone has a right to us.

> And in the knitting and the oneing He is our very true Spouse, and we His loved wife and His fair maiden. With which wife He was never displeased, for He saith: 'I love thee and thou lovest me, and our love shall never be parted in two.'

These lines from Juliana of Norwich, with their eager acceptance of metaphors drawn from sexual love, are sanctioned by centuries of Christian tradition, and still lend beauty to most ceremonies of profession. Unfortunately, some religious are embarrassed or even repelled by an imagery offered to them by our Lord himself. Unsuitable language may partly explain the tendency to shy away from the suggestion that, through her vows, the religious woman and her Savior enter into a union comparable to that of betrothal. That archaic word "spouse," no longer a part of normal speech,

exhausted by sentimental poets and preachers, sticks in our throat; and "bridegroom" and "bride" are not a great deal better. It is beyond our power to remedy the shortcomings of vocabulary, but a lack of the right words for it must not deprive the Christian soul, above all the soul of the woman consecrated to God, of an imagery which can be of immense support to the spiritual life. If a woman, leading the religious life, does not think of Christ and herself as somehow united in a fashion resembling that of husband and wife, it is difficult to see how she can think of her union with him at all, or what else she can fall back on. She is a woman, a potential wife and mother, and the images drawn from affection or friendship cannot move her deeply. Another saint has written lines that do not contain a single one of the pseudo-poetic terms to which we might make objection, yet they make it clear that here is a true wife and mother beginning her day:

> Formerly, when I was in the world, upon getting up in the morning, I used to think of everything that might happen to me that day, both pleasant and unpleasant. And, if all I could look forward to was trouble, I used to get up rather sad. Now, it is just the other way round: as I think of the difficulty and suffering which await me, I begin the day all the more joyful and full of courage, in the measure that I see ahead of me more chances to prove my love for our Lord, and to earn a living for unfortunate sinners, who are my children.

This passage from Saint Therese is worth a careful look for another reason. Notice how she appreciates the value of the image of sexual love as teaching us, not only what the love of Christ is, but also what it is not. Here is someone who stands in no danger of getting the two confused. Her union with her Lord she recognizes as an entirely spiritual thing, founded on faith. Her "wifehood" and "motherhood" bring her no human comfort but only a daily share in his passion, and a daily share in his responsibility for sinners; and the bread she must earn for her children is, of course, the bread of divine grace. No, we must not forget that sexual love is the lowest of all, the furthest from divine, because so full of passion. If it is mysterious, the reason is the same as that which makes the life of plants obscure to us, namely, that much of it lies below the level of conscious thought. If hard to

control, it is for the same reason that passions like hunger and thirst are hard to control. In this sort of love, sense-pleasure is so important that, without it, love could not begin at all, and could not long survive. Again, we may remember, of all human attachments it is the only one which is by nature exclusive: it seeks its own, and wants love's joy for itself. And because of its intensity, and of its natural selfishness and exclusiveness, it can lead to great cruelty and evil.

But charity, as the little saint of Lisieux so well knew, needs no emotional excitement, no sense-attraction. It draws its strength from above, not from below; from calm faith, not from instinct. It begins not in sense-pleasure, but in self-denial. And, far from being selfish and exclusive, it takes into itself the love of all mankind.[1] In fact, charity, the true love of God, cannot endure the thought that God is not loved by every creature under heaven.

Nor can the love of Christ ever work any evil, either to self or to others. It is true, of course, that out of love for him we may have to ignore the tears or reproaches of parents and friends: "He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." But by putting his love first, we can never do genuine injury to a single soul. Nor does our Lord ever ask us to reject, disown, or deny natural love for father, mother, family, or friends. We must love him more than these, but this does not mean loving them less than we should. To prefer any human person to God is not to love them truly, because it is not their true good we are then seeking.

And there is another difference. The love of man and woman, though strong beyond all others, does not last. The love of Christ will endure through this life and eternal life. No power on earth or in heaven can disturb our hold on our Lord. The love of him

[1] There is a rather crude simplification here. Like all truly great metaphors, that which we are studying has so many facets that it is not easy to do justice to them all. The fact is that even the jealous exclusiveness of sexual love can teach us something of the nature of Charity. Recall the passage from Saint Paul: "I am jealous of you with the jealousy of God..."; or this, from the *Imitation*: "Give admittance therefore to Christ, and deny all others." But of course, the more jealously we love Christ, the more we come to identify ourselves with his every thought, deed, and desire; and the more we find ourselves inevitably, with no distraction of purpose, with no real change in the object of our charity, loving all human beings through and in him. This theme will be taken up again when we come to consider how natural loves are transformed into charity.

survives all ordeals of body and spirit. Not even the apparent coldness and indifference of Christ himself, not even years of unanswered prayer, of spiritual darkness, of failure and frustration, can do more than bring patience and purification to the love which is his own work in our hearts.

> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction, or distress, or persecution, or hunger, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword? For thy sake, says the scripture, we face death at every moment, reckoned no better than sheep marked down for the slaughter. Yet in all this we are conquerors, through him who has granted us his love. Of this I am fully persuaded: neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, neither what is present nor what is to come, no force whatever, neither the height above us nor the depth beneath us, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which comes to us in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:35-39).

Nor have we yet scaled the utmost heights of charity. Do you remember that kind of love which we called appreciation? If anyone deserves the homage of our utter admiration, surely it is he who made us so wonderfully and then, more wonderfully still, re-made us. Sacred Scripture, the liturgy, and all the prayers of the saints are filled with a love of God, of Christ, which asks nothing of him, seeks nothing in him, lays no claim to him; which expresses neither fear nor hope, neither thanksgiving nor sorrow for sin, but simply joy and wonder at his glory. "Thou alone art holy, Thou alone art Lord, Thou alone supreme over all, Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. So be it."

Is this a great love of God? This much we can say: in its pure form it is the hardest one. To repeat all those praises is easy enough: "We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory"; "Let us praise God, for He is good"; "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." But to mean what we say? To mean it with all our heart and soul? To want nothing of God or, at least, to want most of all only this: that his goodness and glory be known and praised by the whole world; that his name be made holy, that his kingdom come, his will be done; this alone, this above all, no matter what may happen to us?

There seems no doubt that this is the highest and truest charity, and though we may still feel ourselves far off from such love, we must never doubt that God can give it to us. Such a longing that God should have all, that he should be all; that the whole universe of nature, of men and angels should grow into one great act of adoration of his infinite majesty, is the nearest a creature can come to a pure gift-love towards the Creator. It is with this love made perfect that we are to love him for all eternity, nor does it appear that about this supreme charity any natural human love can teach us much. When asked what was the greatest of the commandments, our Lord replied without picture or parable: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and thy whole soul, and thy whole mind" (Matt. 22:37).

THE AUTHORS

This month we have articles by three contributors who are well known to our readers: *Father Paul Hinnebusch, O.P.*, of Ponchatoula, Louisiana; *Father A. Durand*, of London, Ontario; and *Father Columban Browning, C.P.*, of Des Moines, Iowa. *Sister M. Helene, C.S.A.*, our poet, teaches English and Latin at Saint Augustine Academy in Lakewood, Ohio.

Sense of Responsibility

COLUMBAN BROWNING, C.P.

The perfection to which a religious is called needs a strong, solid foundation. Like the towering summit of a skyscraper, this perfection cannot stand alone. No matter how majestic may be the peak of the Empire State Building, it would be absurd to think of it apart from the solid foundation and building upon which it stands. Remove or even weaken the foundation and the tower would come crashing down.

It is the same with religious perfection. It is not something that stands alone, independent of all support. The majestic peak of perfection can be built only when we have laid a solid foundation.

We may say that there are three steps in the attainment of religious holiness or perfection. We must be: (1) Perfect human beings — the equivalent of the foundation of the building. (2) Perfect Christians — corresponding to the building itself. (3) Perfect religious — which is like the towering summit of a building.

The reason why religious sometimes fail in their efforts to attain religious perfection is not so much because they lack sincerity or do not desire holiness. It is rather because they do not put enough effort into laying the foundation. They want the peak but neglect to lay the understructure that must support it.

Here we wish to call attention to a very important cornerstone of the foundation of our spiritual structure. That cornerstone we will call *sense of responsibility*. This stone belongs to the very foundation of the building — the perfecting of oneself as a human being. Without it, there simply can be no solid building, nor crowning summit to the building. To the degree that it is lacking, the building and the summit will also be weak.

I. BASIC NOTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

The dictionary defines responsibility in terms of accountability for our deeds. A good synonym for responsibility is reliability. Such a quality is a properly human one. Animals do not have it, no matter how well they may be trained. It is a quality, further-

more, of the mature human being, for to the degree that a person lacks the proper use of his faculties he is lacking in responsibility. Responsibility is an effect of free will. As a result of a man's ability to know, he is able to choose either the good itself or evil under the aspect of good. God, who gave this gift of free will, gave to man the obligation to choose the good, and in the choice of that good is found the precise field for man to be responsible.

It is immediately obvious that religious, of all people, have the duty of being responsible. They should stand out as mature human beings and mature Christians, and therefore they should be the first to respond to God by choosing the good. This means that a sense of responsibility should certainly be an essential component of a true religious.

There are various aspects under which the responsibility of a religious might be considered. (1) As individual human beings, our happiness depends upon how well and consistently we choose the good. (2) As religious, we are members of an organized society, and that society cannot accomplish its purpose unless we meet our individual responsibilities. (3) As creatures of God (most important) we have received from God all that we have and are obliged to give it back to him in the best possible form. We are to use our intelligence and free will to see and choose the good and thus promote the glory of God — the end for which he created us.

II. THE RELIGIOUS AND RESPONSIBILITY TO GOD

It is possible for even a religious to have a rather short-sighted view of the meaning of responsibility. He might, for example, think only in terms of meeting the expectations of a human superior. Or he might think of it as a means to be content with himself. But true responsibility must be seen as a basic duty to God and it is only such a motive that can meet the needs of a sense of responsibility in the fullest sense.

Even the briefest reflection should show the necessity for any human being to *respond* to God. He has given us our existence, our talents, the gift of faith, the life of sanctifying grace, the sacraments, our vocation, the promise of eternal life. No matter what blessing we might reflect upon, we must see it in the light of what Saint Paul said: "What have you that you have not received? And

if you have received it, why do you boast as if you have not received it?" (1 Cor. 4:7).

True responsibility is really but a total application of the virtue of humility. It is the recognition that we are but stewards of the good gifts of God as exemplified in our Lord's parable of the talents. Our Lord commended those who had used their talents well (been truly responsible in their use of them) whereas he condemned the one who did not use his talent to advantage. In fact, he ordered him to be deprived of the talent he had received and cast into the darkness outside (Mt. 25:14 ff.) A significant lesson contained in this parable is the fact that responsibility is no merely indifferent matter but one on which we shall be judged.

III. EFFECTS OF A LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY

Every religious should ponder on the fact that anyone who fails to meet his responsibility to God faces many sad consequences. The most serious of these is failure before God. God is robbed of the love and service he deserves from every creature and child of his. In other words, the whole reason of God's creation is thwarted in that he does not receive from this creature the glory that was to be the first purpose of its existence.

There is also this consequence of not meeting our responsibilities: we rob ourselves of the happiness and fulfillment that come only from meeting them. Our happiness is intricately tied up with our giving to God the love and service he deserves.

Finally, when we fail to meet our responsibilities, we rob souls of the grace that God intends we should bring to them. This applies, first of all, to the meritorious value in itself of a faithful life for the salvation of souls. Religious souls, as the chosen of God, are intended to be a powerful factor for the upbuilding of the Mystical Body of Christ. By their prayers, sacrifices, and general fervor of their life they are able to be a medium of grace and salvation to souls all over the world. To the degree that a religious fails to be what he should be, he impedes the flow of grace through himself to other members of the Mystical Body. Not only this, but every religious has an apostolate to specific souls that come under his influence and the degree of his effectiveness in bringing grace to these souls is directly proportioned to what he is personally before God. A religious who is faithful in devoting himself

fully to God by truly meeting his responsibilities will inevitably be a channel of grace in his apostolate. By contrast, a religious who shirks his own responsibilities to God will to the same degree fail to be a true apostle to the souls for whom he works.

At this point, a special word is in place regarding young religious. These must realize the importance of the time of their early training for cultivating a sense of responsibility. The habits that a religious acquires in his formative years are usually life-long habits. If a religious fails to form right habits and attitudes when he is young, it will take a miracle of grace to change that religious as he grows older. It is in recognition of this simple fact that an ever increasing effort is being put into the training of young religious today through such means as the Juniorate program now in use in most communities of religious women. While such a program is not an infallible remedy for the failure to lay a sufficient foundation, it is an indispensible means of assuring that all possible is done to assure the solid training of young religious.

IV. MEANS OF CULTIVATING RESPONSIBILITY

Whether we are young, middle aged, or old, we all need to form good habits of responsibility, or to preserve good habits already formed. This is not something that automatically takes care of itself, but like all human endeavours it requires constant attention. Among the means to this end we may list the following:

(1) Faithful performance of duty. We must try to see each detail of our daily religious life as an aspect of our service of God and consider nothing too small to merit our utmost fidelity. Whether it be our daily prayer, observance of the daily schedule, application to study or work, attendance at and participation in daily recreation, or proper attention to such ordinary things as meals and sleep, each detail must be seen as something that we can offer for the love of God.

(2) Serious tackling of faults. All of us tend to fall into carelessness and bad habits, at least in little things. The weakness of human nature will make this a repeated factor to deal with. An excellent means of growing in responsibility is to be found in our reaction to these human tendencies. When we realize that we are slipping in our fidelity, we should take upon ourselves the duty of correcting what is amiss, instead of waiting to be corrected by

our superiors. If we humbly admit our failings before ourselves and before God and sincerely try to apply the proper remedy, this initiative on our part is the best possible means of strengthening in ourselves a sense of responsibility. We have a daily reminder of our need for self correction when we face God in meditation, a monthly one in the day of recollection, and a golden opportunity that the annual retreat provides.

(3) Form the habit of thinking of others as well as ourselves. One of the principal causes of failure to face responsibility is selfishness, a preoccupation with our own needs and desires. Consequently there is no better remedy for our failures than a spirit of unselfishness. Again, anyone's daily religious life is filled with opportunities to notice the needs of others and lend a helping hand in those needs. An unselfish religious will inevitably be a responsible religious.

In all such efforts, the religious needs to remember that he is not serving men, but God. And God sees even the most hidden thoughts of the heart. We may be able to deceive men, but God always sees and knows us as we are, stripped of all the masks by which we so carefully try to hide our true self even from ourselves.

V. PROBLEMS OF FORMATION IN RESPONSIBILITY

The religious life is a life organized under the principle of obedience. The superiors in whom the authority resides have the sometimes painful duty of taking the lead in instilling a spirit of responsibility. It is the superior more than any other who can and must create the proper climate for the religious to develop a sense of responsibility. Let us consider briefly the principles that should govern both superiors and subjects in this matter. As in all other things, understanding and cooperation are necessary in this common endeavour.

Superiors cannot and should not be consecrated policemen, constantly on the lookout to find faults to correct in subjects. If a superior does act as a kind of policeman he will possibly be able to hold his subjects down and keep order, but that order would be a rather explosive one. Subjects never react well to a domineering rule, but rather tend to develop a spirit of criticism and rebellion in such circumstances. On the other hand, a superior cannot be completely unconcerned and give full rein to the faults of his

subjects. By such a policy, bad habits are only the more deeply rooted and gradually deteriorate not only the spirit of the individual but also that of the community. A superior needs to follow a wise middle path. He should allow a reasonable amount of freedom, so necessary if the subjects are to develop any responsibility. While allowing this moderate freedom of action, the superior also must be moderately watchful, and when subjects fail to use their freedom rightly, correct them in a spirit of Christian charity. The end always in mind must be not to crush the religious but to lead them gradually to personal initiative in living up to their duties.

It must be pointed out, however, that even the best superior cannot succeed without the cooperation of the subjects. These should try to act as mature adults and justify the trust that is placed in them. Even the best religious will make mistakes (and a wise superior is the first to recognize this fact), but so much depends upon the subject's reaction to such mistakes. If he justifies them he cannot make any progress. If, however, he humbly recognizes and admits his faults before himself, before his superiors, and before God, then those very mistakes can become a stepping stone to true progress in responsibility. Every religious must expect to receive correction at times and should try not to resent this, knowing that for the most part correction is given in a spirit of charity. Even when this might not be the case, a subject should still try to be humble under correction and accept the sacrifice as a means of deepening humility and the sense of responsibility to God.

Promoting a spirit of responsibility is obviously, then, a community endeavour. Superiors must do all they can to promote the proper climate for such a spirit by the wisdom and charity of their rule. Subjects must do their part by cooperating with superiors and developing their personal initiative. When there is such cooperation, the community will flourish and prosper in a fervent and fruitful religious spirit. Without such a spirit, any community is in a sad state indeed and will produce little fruit either in personal holiness or apostolic work.

When we lay this solid foundation-stone, and keep it strong, it will be one of the strongest supports of our spiritual edifice. We can have every reason to hope that we will build our edifice to the very crowning summit of religious holiness and perfection.

RENAISSANCE

Creator of the dying time,
Lover of dry seeds lighting on grass tops,
Pick my youth with cool fingers,

the velvet joys...
springtimes petal-delicate...
yellow baskets of hope...

Pull me up firm and blow me like the dust of a dandelion
into soft earth,
that lying still
I may start life,
Lord of the grey.

SISTER M. HELENE, C.S.A.

Book Reviews

THAT MAN IS YOU. By Louis Evely. Translated by Edmond Bonin. Newman Press, Westminster, Maryland, 1964. Pp. xiv, 297. Cloth, $4.50. Whether you are a Knox fan, a Kleist-Lilly enthusiast, or an adherent to the Confraternity (or Douay) version of the New Testament, it is this reviewer's belief that surprises await you in Abbé Evely's applications of the Gospel in *That Man Is You.* His nine chapter-meditations, written in sense-lines reminiscent of free verse, deal with subjects familiar enough: God's love, our Lady, the Holy Spirit, heaven. But his reflections on these are shot through with insights into the Gospel that are direct, startling, and compellingly right.

For example, we have long accepted the idea that "God alone can forgive sins" as an expression of orthodox theology. The author, however, reminds us:

> "Above and beyond its juridical meaning, we must read this statement as a sort of description of God. Only He 'knows how' to forgive. We surely don't. According to the old saw, women forgive, but never forget. And as for men, they're so self-centered they forget and very rarely take time, thought, or trouble to forgive.... Yes, God is actually the only One who can manage (the whole affair)."

Again, the sin against the Holy Ghost, "the sin that cannot be for-

given," is, we know, the sin of despair. But Abbé Evely reminds us, "Our indifference to others is the real sin against the Holy Spirit." He is the Spirit of life and love, and if we do not let him act in us by giving to our neighbor in love, we sin against him. "As the Gospels fairly shout on every page, doing nothing is what'll damn us."

It is our lack of insight into the Good News of Christ that makes of our confessions, for example, "such gloomy, joyless affairs."

> "Our real crime wasn't what we thought — not those insipid acts that helped us kill time (after all, we had to do something to beguile our emptiness). No, our real crime was that we didn't honestly think there was Someone who could satisfy our hunger and quench our thirst forever; we didn't know who that Someone was and we didn't dare believe in a love so compelling that it made all our imitations unnecessary."

The translation is excellent, retaining the author's easy style and making the Gospel message as attainable to present day readers as it was to those who first heard it in the familiar syllables of the Aramaic dialect that fell from our Lord's lips.

Sister Mary Catherine, O.S.U.
Ursuline Academy
Cumberland, Maryland

THE TWO NUNS. A novel by Anne Huré. Translated by Emma Craufurd. Sheed and Ward, New York, 1964. Pp. 221. Cloth, $4.00.

Publishers' blurbs are usually to be taken with a great amount of reserve, not to say skepticism; but when the jacket of this volume quotes Father Harold Gardiner as saying that this is an "extraordinarily fascinating book" it is merely stating the truth. The story is tense, perceptive, realistic, and concerned with basic ingredients of the religious life. The author's style helps to create the sense of tension, for she is chary of words and makes a few phrases carry the burden of description of a whole scene. For this reason the characters stand out with great forcefulness, not beclouded by small details, and their personalities carry the entire burden of the story.

What is perhaps most important of all, the writer has a tremendous fund of human understanding. She realizes that however black and white opposing forces may seem from the outside, they are never quite so diametrically opposed in their real interests or their ultimate effect. Nothing is so simple as we would usually prefer it to be, and if the purpose of this story is to point that lesson, it succeeds in a striking manner. This is true even in the case of small characters in the plot. None of them is a figment of imagination. All are real people who react with precisely that mixture of spiritual idealism and human frailty that makes life so complicated and so infinitely potential.

This is the kind of book that one can scarcely put down after he has begun it; and when it is finished he feels that he has had an experience that was important for him. It is sincerely recommended to all.

Ronald Roloff, O.S.B.
Saint John's Abbey
Collegeville, Minnesota

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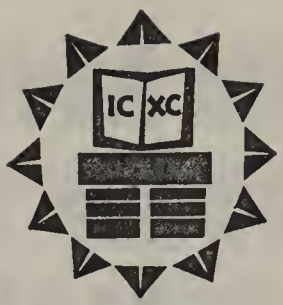

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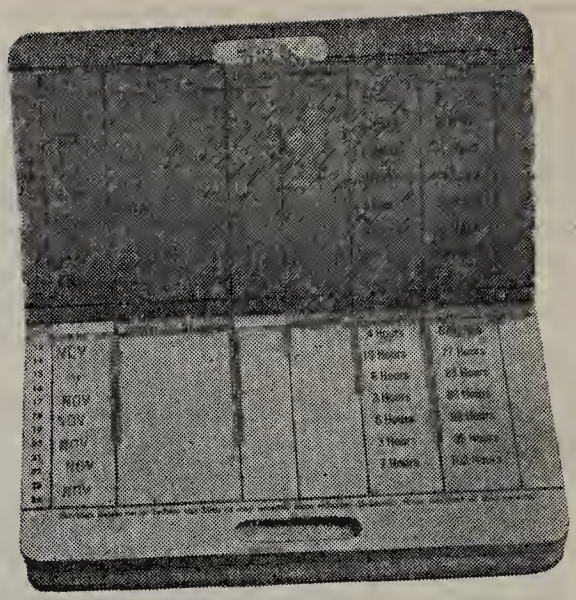

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